



CONNECTING NEIGHBORS

MDOT I-75 Ambassador
Bridge Gateway Project

WELCOME

April/May 2008
Issue 5

This is the 5th edition of “Connecting Neighbors” the bi-monthly newsletter designed to give you information about the MDOT Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. Major construction began on Monday, February 25 and since then significant progress has been made. But have you ever wondered exactly what’s going on at the Gateway construction site? Open the newsletter and take a look! Have you taken a ride on the Gateway Express yet? Check out the schedule for this new commuter line and find out what those strange symbols are along Michigan Avenue. Want even more information? Go to the Gateway Web site at www.michigan.gov/gateway.

News Conference Crowd Shows Support for New Transit Options

from communities as near as Detroit and as far away as the Downriver area. They all came to mark the start of a historic partnership that is offering new transit options for commuters while construction of the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project is underway.

The first initiative was the opening of the State’s first HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lane. The lane runs along a 5.25-mile stretch of Michigan Avenue from Wyoming Avenue to Detroit’s Central Business District. Like HOV lanes in other states it is designed to decrease the number of vehicles moving through a congested corridor by encouraging commuters to use car pools, commuter vans, and buses instead of driving alone.

The Michigan Avenue HOV lane opened on Monday, February 25; the very day the I-75 closure went into effect. This was not at all coincidental, since the lane serves as one of the alternate routes available to commuters during the 22-month closure. MDOT is currently conducting traffic counts to determine how many commuters are using the new lane. In the meantime, informal observation indicates a considerable increase in the number of motorists using Michigan Avenue and the HOV lane as an alternate routes.

Addressing those assembled, Smart General Manager Hayes Jones said, “When I tell people we are working together with MDOT and DDOT to develop the first HOV lane in Michigan, they are ecstatic. A huge amount of planning went into this project to relieve congestion and keep traffic moving. But this collaboration has gone one step further; we are giving the community mobility options they never had before.”

The “one step further” that Jones was referring to was the start up of a brand new commuter bus service called the Gateway Express. The new line is jointly operated by DDOT and SMART and is the first time that the two have partnered to provide service on a domestic route.

On a cold, clear February morning more than 125 people gathered at O’Blivion’s Corktown Café located in southwest Detroit. The enthusiastic crowd included city, county and state officials, transit supporters and residents



Speakers at the February 15 press conference included (left to right) Hayes Jones, SMART General Manager; Kim Trent, director of the Governor’s Office for Southeast Michigan; Anthony Adams, deputy mayor for the City of Detroit; Tony Kratofil, former MDOT region engineer; DDOT Director Lovevett Williams; Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and MDOT Director Kurt Steudle.

How to Catch the Gateway Express Commuter Bus Service

You can save time, money, gas and stress by commuting between the Downriver area and Detroit's Central Business District via the Gateway Express. The service operates Monday through Friday during morning rush hours from 6 to 9 a.m. and during evening rush hours from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. It is jointly operated by DDOT and SMART and picks up commuters at three SMART Park & Ride lots in the Downriver area located at:

- The Gibraltar Trade Center on the south side of Eureka Road, a block west of I-75 in Taylor
- Faith Christian Church on the north side of Outer Drive about a half of a mile west of I-75 in Melvindale
- The Melvindale SMART lot on the northeast corner of Allen Road and Outer Drive in Melvindale

Cost is \$2 per one-way trip. Economical multi-ride passes from DDOT and SMART are also available. For more information on Gateway Express service, call SMART Customer Service at 866-962-5515, or DDOT Transit Information at 313-933-1300.

"This is an important partnership for transit in Metro Detroit," said State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle. "We commend DDOT and SMART for coming together to make this possible. We hope it represents the first of many partnerships involving MDOT, DDOT and SMART."

The Gateway Express transports commuters between Downriver and Detroit's Central Business District during morning and evening rush hours. The bus service extends 19.25 miles from the Gibraltar Trade Center to Larned and St. Antoine streets in downtown Detroit, including

travel along the new HOV lane. To date, more than 50 passengers daily are utilizing the new service which departs from three Park & Ride lots in the Downriver area.

Speaking of the new service DDOT Director Lovevett Williams said: "We look forward to working with MDOT and SMART to provide reliable and customer-friendly service alternatives during this



After the press conference, everyone boarded DDOT and SMART buses wrapped in advertising for the new Gateway Express commuter bus service. The route is jointly operated by the two transit authorities.

historic and monumental project."

After Williams's remarks, everyone filed out onto Michigan Avenue and boarded two waiting buses. One was operated by DDOT, the other by SMART. Both were identically wrapped in colorful advertisements for the Gateway Express. With all aboard, both buses pulled into the new HOV lane and headed down Michigan Avenue marking a new era in regional cooperation and improved transit for metro Detroit.



Vittoria Katanski from the Southwest Detroit Business Association and Be Martin from the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation prepare to board the Gateway Express.

Signs like this one, along with diamond-shaped symbols painted directly onto the pavement, mark the new Michigan Avenue HOV lane.



Using the New Michigan Avenue HOV Lane

The Michigan Avenue HOV lane can be used by any passenger vehicle with at least two occupants. Additional riders may be adults, children or even babies in car seats. Like HOV lanes nationwide, the Michigan Avenue HOV lane is easy to spot. It is designated by the letters "HOV" and diamond-shaped markings painted on the roadway pavement and by street signs that read "HOV 2+ Lane." The lane runs along a 5.25-mile stretch of Michigan Avenue from Wyoming Avenue to Detroit's Central Business District.



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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?



O.K.! By now it's no longer news that I-75 is closed from Rosa Parks Boulevard to Clark Street.

Motorists – especially frequenter users -- have scoped out serviceable alternate routes to use until things get back to normal in late 2009. But even as you're driving along your newly chosen path, are you wondering ... What are they doing down there, anyway?!

Well, here's what happening ... 370 workers are toiling away on the project and the work is nearly 30% complete. All of the new freeway barrier walls have been completed. The service drive has been completed on the southbound side and is already in heavy use by area motorists. In addition, the new exit at Vernor Highway is open to traffic providing increased access to Mexicantown and southwest Detroit. To assist local businesses in attracting customers, MDOT has placed a number of way-finding signs pointing the way to local commerce. Community Liaison Ed Tatum continues to meet with area merchants and community residents to assist them as construction continues.

But what does the construction site look like? Well, a picture is worth a thousand words ...



MDOT photographer Jim Lemay





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MDOT Region Office
18101 West Nine Mile Rd.
Southfield, MI 48075

Mexicantown and Southwest Detroit are open for business even while Gateway construction is underway.

Here's a map to help you plan your visit to the community's many restaurants, businesses and special events.

Visit Mexicantown and Southwest Detroit!

To Mexicantown from:

1 NORTHBOUND I-75NB I-75 to Livernois Ave exit.
Right on Livernois to Fort St. Left on Fort to Clark St. Left on Clark to Vernor Hwy. Left on Vernor Hwy

2 FROM SOUTHBOUND I-75SB I-75 to Rosa Parks Blvd exit Follow service drive to 14th St. Left on 14th to Michigan Ave. Right on Michigan to 16th St. Left on 16th to Vernor Hwy. Right on Vernor Hwy

3 FROM EASTBOUND I-96EB I-96 to Vernor Hwy exit

From Mexicantown to:

4 SOUTHBOUND I-75 Vernor Hwy to Clark St. Left on Clark to I-75 ramp

5 TO NORTHBOUND I-75 Vernor Hwy to Ste Anne St.
Right on Ste Anne to Bagley St. Left on Bagley to Rosa Parks. Left on Rosa Parks to I-75 ramp

6 TO WESTBOUND I-96 Vernor Hwy to Ste Anne St.
Right on Ste Anne to Bagley St. Left on Bagley to Rosa Parks. Left on Rosa Parks to service drive. Left on service drive to I-96 ramp

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